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ABSTRACT

This paper suggests a number of steps for evaluating the effectiveness of teacher education programs. The contents include: "Introduction," which looks at studies documenting the need for improved teacher education, educational accountability, and ten models for teacher preparation; "Role of the University in Teacher Education," which discusses the cybernetic principles of task analysis and instrument analysis for evaluating teacher education programs; "Leads to Marked Program Improvement," which emphasizes the importance of professional organizations setting standards which novice teachers are expected to meet, college educators suggesting changes for undergraduate courses, school systems communicating their expectations in the preparation of teachers, and colleges adopting competency-based teacher education programs for the realization of long term and short term goals; and "Conclusion," which stresses that the validity of a teacher education program is determined by the performance of teachers in the classroom. (WR)

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NORMATIVE CRITERIA AND EVALUATION

EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF
UNIVERSITY PROGRAMS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

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EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF UNIVERSITY PROGRAMS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

Introduction

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During the past twenty years in the United States, several studies have documented the need for improved teacher education in reading. Hester's survey of 800 elementary school teachers in 1953, for example, disclosed that many felt inadequately prepared to teach reading.⁵ In 1955, Robinson's survey cited the importance of establishing qualifications for remedial reading personnel.⁹ Following these publications, the Harvard-Carnegie reports of 1961 and 1963 described college programs for prospective teachers of reading and then examined the status of elementary school reading programs throughout the country. Perhaps most significant among the 67 recommendations made by Austin and Morrison was their clarion call for upgrading the preservice and inservice training of teachers.^{2,3} In the latter half of the 1960's, the First Grade Studies focused national attention upon the methods and materials of reading instruction. Despite this shift of emphasis in research efforts from the teacher to the curriculum, there emerged, not unexpectedly, increased recognition of the influence of the reading teacher.

Undoubtedly, the cumulative effect of these studies and others related to teacher preparation led many states to adopt certification standards for reading teachers and specialists. Furthermore, many colleges and universities strengthened their course offerings in reading for both elementary and secondary teachers. But, having accomplished these changes, educators could not rest complacently upon their laurels; nor could they

afford to delude themselves or the public that these modifications would result in the quality education deemed essential for all children in the remaining years of the twentieth century. Had they seen fit to do so, however, innovative members of the profession, as well as very verbal educational critics, would have continued to point to antiquated educational systems, unyielding to social and technological changes, and to traditional teacher education programs that did little more than perpetuate an already stagnant status quo.¹

Nevertheless, for a number of years, colleges and universities appeared to evaluate the effectiveness of their programs for teacher education by a single criterion: the production of ever-increasing numbers of graduates who found teaching jobs in the nation's schools. And then came the '70s with dwindling school enrollments and greater competition for teaching positions, accompanied by higher expectations for teacher-performance and pupil-achievement, and a general loss of public confidence in higher institutions of learning. Reformers began in earnest to exert social, political, and economic pressures on the schools, demanding accountability in every area of educational endeavor, including teacher preparation.

Many people believed that a fundamental restructuring of the entire educational system was in order. Some of them convinced the federal government to allocate several million dollars for the development of experimental models designed to create a new kind of teacher who would be "guaranteed" to get results in the classroom. Ten different models for

teacher preparation from ten educational institutions across the United States offered especially bold, innovative approaches to elementary teacher preparation, their directions being away from the limiting, prescribed programs of the past toward those that were open-ended and process-oriented with students' needs and interests as high priorities. The new programs rely generally upon objectives stated in behavioral or performance terms, opportunities for individualized instruction, and provisions for flexible curricular content through the use of instructional modules. Noteworthy, also, is the inclusion of varying levels of experiences with children in and away from elementary school classrooms.

Role of the University in Teacher Education

The University has the responsibility for preparing teachers for the innovative practices and concepts they will encounter in the field. It can examine and analyze the many facets of "effective teaching" with the goal of setting standards for adequate preparation of prospective teachers, looking beyond ivied walls to the grassroots level of the classroom setting. As pointed out above, teachers in the field are faced with educational problems with newly coined labels--cognitive and affective objectives; competency-based education; criterion-referenced vs. norm-referenced tests; individually-guided instruction; diagnostic-prescriptive teaching; and accountability--to name a few. Teachers in the field are also faced with newly devised approaches to reading instruction, to "programed materials", to new materials and equipment, even to new buildings constructed especially for such concepts as team teaching, library centers as the core of the curriculum, open-spaced settings instead of walled classrooms, and so on. Teacher-preparing colleges will need to make periodic evaluations of their programs in order to provide ones that are current and viable.

In order to prepare guidelines for evaluating their teacher education programs, the University can adapt the cybernetic principles of task analysis and instrument analysis. It can focus upon the ultimate objective -- the effective teacher. Each of us engaged in the preparation of teachers must at some time have experienced at least a vague feeling of disquiet concerning our efforts: Is there something more or something

different we could be doing to improve our program? Are we giving prospective teachers adequate preparation? Another line of questioning we might attempt to answer for our own program would include such soul-searching as--What do we mean by a good teacher? What components of his education make him good? In our analysis we would look first at the responsibilities faced by the classroom teacher. We would analyze the tasks faced by him as he attempts to fulfill his responsibilities to the individual children assigned him. Then we would need to study the implications for his preservice instruction at the college level and for the continuing development of his career at the inservice level. These have been delineated on the following Table, which considers the accountability of both the college and the school system for the preparation of the effective teacher. (See Table 1)

Teacher Responsibilities

Task Analysis

Implications for Teacher Training Institutions

Implications for School Systems

- | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| 1) To produce readers capable of reading effectively for their own purposes | Individualization based upon ability and achievement levels | Developing courses which introduce Child Growth and Development
Foundations of Education
Children's Literature
Reading Methods
Reading in Content Areas
Structure and Use of the English Language
English as a Second Language
Observations in Classroom Settings
Internship experiences with children under supervision | Accepting new teachers only with the preparation indicated here or in accordance with I.R.A. standards |
| 2) To be knowledgeable concerning the embryo "good reader" -- the child's abilities as well as his achievements to date | Diagnostic-prescriptive teaching
Use of criterion-referenced instruction and testing | Offering demonstrations and experiences with tests-- administration and interpretation of informal and standardized instruments | Assigning the novice to an experienced teacher for one or more semesters |
| 3) To be knowledgeable concerning the many facets of instructional effective techniques and materials | Varied approaches to learning; hardware and software to implement instruction | Providing experiences in fitting materials to individuals, at their independent and instructional levels
Formulating guidelines for continuous program evaluation and modification | Encouraging all teachers to keep up-to-date through observations demonstrations workshops professional reading graduate courses attendance at professional meetings |

Leads to Marked Program Improvement

Just as some professions such as law and medicine have set certain standards which novices are expected to meet, a strong organization such as the International Reading Association can point out standards which novice teachers can be expected to meet--the knowledges and competencies which the effective teacher exhibits. In fact, through its Commission on High Quality Teacher Education, I.R.A. has published recently a volume entitled Modular Preparation for Teaching Reading¹³ which contains a well-developed program for preservice and continuing education. As Durr states in the Foreword:

" . . . this volume finally incorporates the principles of individual differences into teacher education in two dimensions. First, the modules provide for differences in both the previous learnings and mastery rate of those being trained to teach reading. Second, the modules provide a variety of delivery systems so that those responsible for the education of teachers may adapt the modules according to their own strengths and professional commitments."⁴

Universities can now use this volume to translate desired teaching competencies into objectives which in turn can be transformed into standards of excellence.

In addition to using publications of I.R.A. devoted to the improvement of the education of those who teach reading, each college or university undertaking evaluations of the effectiveness of its teacher education program will probably take a number of steps. Three possibilities may be categorized under the general headings of surveys, assessment of goals, and examinations of innovative practices. Results obtained from these steps should lead to the formulation of

guidelines for the institution's next decade of teacher preparation, with built-in provisions for earlier modifications if they are needed.

Surveys by collegiate educators often include carefully developed questionnaires and interviews of students presently enrolled in their programs and of graduates, preferably first-year teachers and others whose teaching experiences cover a selected span of time such as three years and ten years. These individuals can be asked to identify specific teaching problems they have encountered, to react to the adequacy of their preparation, and to suggest needed changes for a better program at their Alma Mater. Examples of questions these teachers might be asked are, "How do you evaluate your undergraduate preparation? What would you like to see new teachers get in their preparation?" Or, "What I found most useful was" When teacher college personnel analyze both objective and open-ended items, they should gain valuable information for program changes related to the educational core requirements, the content and conduct of methods courses, the observation and participation activities of their pre-service program, and the student-teaching experiences.

Surveys of course offerings can be helpful in determining the adequacy of their content according to the general and specific competencies that teachers are expected to acquire. A review can be made of the techniques, approaches, and materials introduced to prospective teachers, to assure that students are being exposed to current philosophies and practices. One such review, for example, revealed that

new teachers were acquainted with only one approach to the teaching of reading, while literally dozens of others remained unfamiliar. Periodic studies also sometimes demonstrate the need to move from instructor-lecture type courses to more classroom observations of good teachers in action, to demonstrations and discussions of new methods and materials, to video-tape viewing and critiques, and to small group activities and presentations.

School systems expect to make contributions to the improvement of the preparation of the products they receive. They should be given ample opportunities to communicate their expectations and to explain any special conditions of their students and communities that should be taken into consideration by the universities preparing their new teachers.

In addition to surveys of various groups who should be involved in establishing the quality of teacher education programs, a second step in the evaluative process might be accomplished by an assessment of program goals. Questions such as the following can serve as guides: Are the institution's goals for its teacher education program readily available for study by all interested individuals and groups? Are the statements of these goals too limited? too broad? Are they clearly presented in terms of competencies which specify desired teaching-learning acts or behaviors of prospective teachers? Do they include the objectives considered important in the development of both measurable outcomes of knowledge and skills and the less tangible outcomes of attitudes, appreciations, and values? Do the goals incorporate com-

potencies identified as being essential for maximizing the emotional, cognitive, and social growth of children?

As a third step in the improvement of university teacher education, an examination of innovative programs should be anticipated. When carefully selected and tailored to the needs and resources of the institution, these programs and materials can greatly enhance the professional program.

Within the past five years in the United States, Competency Based Teacher Education (CBTE), also referred to as Performance Based Teacher Education (PBTE), has received much attention. Some 17 states have committed their teacher preparation institutions to competency/performance based programs, either as the only route to certification or as a permissible alternative. Tennessee, on the other hand, has mandated competency-based programs for school administrators but not for teachers. The movement continues to gain momentum from month to month, despite reactions which range from enthusiastic support to strong opposition.

Ideally, the long-term goal of CBTE is to upgrade the quality of education in the nation's schools by means of improved teacher education. Impact of the movement probably will be felt in not less than ten years, a factor which may impede acceptance of the concept by many colleges and universities. An intermediate range goal (4-10 years), is "to prepare knowledgeable and skilled teachers in a curriculum whose elements have been tested for validity against criteria of school effectiveness."¹² Short range goals to

be accomplished within four years include: (1) the identification of tentative teacher competencies, (2) the preparation of instructional materials and evaluation procedures, and (3) the establishment of conditions to validate the teacher education curricula and to promote teacher behavior research.¹²

More immediate expectations upon the implementation of CBTE include: (1) stronger relationships among teacher educators, public schools, and the organized teaching profession; (2) greater student satisfaction with skill-oriented teacher education programs, and (3) increased accountability of teacher education programs.¹²

The Florida Center for Teacher Training Materials at the University of Miami in Coral Gables has an impressive collection of modules or training packages in reading and other curriculum areas. The Center collects, catalogs, reviews, and reports on competency-based teacher education materials developed in the United States and offers its assistance in the implementation of these instructional resources.

May⁸ has developed Mastery Performance Modules for Teachers in Training with accompanying tapes for To Help Children Read. Croft Educational Services have produced teacher education materials which may be helpful in the preparation of reading teachers.

Professional literature is replete with articles and books for the perusal of those who intend to embark upon an improved teacher education program. Houston and Howsam's Competency-Based Teacher Education: Progress, Problems, and Prospects⁶ and Rosner's The Power of Competency-Based Teacher

Education: A Report¹¹ are representative of these recent publications.

Houston and his associates have performed an Herculean task in providing access to a comprehensive annotated listing of instructional materials. Resources annotated in their collection include films, slide/tapes, modules, programed texts, and multi-media kits for training prospective or inservice educational personnel.⁷

Conclusion

To anticipate immediate outcomes from such a complex venture as the design and implementation of new teacher education programs is totally unrealistic. Even a 10-year projection before changes can be completed may be optimistic, but gradually improvements will be seen in classrooms of the '70s--especially in those rooms whose teachers are the graduates of colleges and universities devoted to quality preservice education programs. Every institution has the power to move rapidly from the traditional programs described by B. O. Smith in Research in Teacher Education:

These programs "have developed over the last hundred years, and especially since the beginning of the present century, on the basis of meager and inadequate knowledge acquired largely from the practical experience of teachers, general psychological principles, and studies in philosophy and the social sciences."¹⁴

This paper has suggested a number of steps toward the evaluation of the effectiveness of teacher education, but the validity of a teacher education program is determined ultimately by the production of teachers who perform more effectively in classrooms than had they not received such training. At present, solid research evidence does not exist to support a direct relationship between teacher behavior and pupil learning.¹⁰ We must proceed, therefore, on the best bases we have in 1974 for higher quality teacher preparation. Hopefully, our participation in this work-session will result in a habit of communicating with each other so that each of our countries will benefit from the ideas we

generate. We believe that effective teacher education programs in reading in the future depend a great deal upon the expertise of the very people who are here today.

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